

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 22

Introduced by Assembly Member Gorell

May 21, 2013

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 22—Relative to the federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 22, as introduced, Gorell. The federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009.

This measure would call upon the United States Congress and the President's administration to expedite actions at the United States Department of State to process the visa applications of Afghan allies who have been identified and vetted by the United States military or other agencies as having risked their lives by supporting and working for United States troops overseas, and to expand the number of visas offered to our Afghans allies.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Thousands of Californians served in uniform in
- 2 the war in Afghanistan; and
- 3 WHEREAS, Countless local Afghan nationals provided trusted
- 4 and life-saving support to Americans and their allies in Afghanistan
- 5 as interpreters, advisors, liaisons, and other functionaries; and
- 6 WHEREAS, More than 8,000 Afghani interpreters worked for
- 7 the United States during the conflict, risking the lives of their
- 8 families and themselves to assist American troops and the United
- 9 States government; and

1 WHEREAS, It was recently pointed out in the New York Times
2 that with United States Armed Forces currently withdrawing from
3 Afghanistan, many of the local nationals who provided support to
4 American forces are now the target of Taliban and other insurgent
5 attacks. In February 2013, two interpreters were gunned down in
6 Logar Province, south of Kabul, Afghanistan. In December 2012,
7 an interpreter working in Jalalabad was singled out while heading
8 home on leave, and Taliban assailants killed his two brothers in
9 the attack; and

10 WHEREAS, The United Nations has reported that casualties
11 resulting from targeted killings of civilians by antigovernment
12 elements increased by 53 percent in the first six months of 2012,
13 in comparison to the corresponding period in 2011; and

14 WHEREAS, The federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009
15 authorizes the issuance of up to 1,500 special immigrant visas
16 (SIVs) annually through the 2013 fiscal year to Afghan nationals
17 who have worked for or on behalf of the United States Government
18 in Afghanistan and who find their lives in danger as a consequence
19 of their employment; and

20 WHEREAS, Although 7,500 SIVs were intended to be issued
21 by the federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, only about
22 1,000 have been issued to date, and as of last fall, there was a
23 backlog of more than 5,000 applicants waiting to begin the process.
24 This delay further risks the lives of important, dedicated allies who
25 have already risked their lives in the call of duty to our soldiers
26 and our country; and

27 WHEREAS, There are significant differences between the visa
28 programs created for Iraq and Afghanistan. While the Iraq program
29 allowed for up to 25,000 visas, the Afghan Allies Protection Act
30 of 2009 only makes 7,500 visas available. Additionally, the Afghan
31 visa program limits family members to only a spouse and
32 dependent children under 21 years of age, while the Iraq program
33 allowed for parents, siblings, and all children; and

34 WHEREAS, The Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 presents
35 the opportunity to save the lives of Afghans who saved the lives
36 of Americans and to maintain our commitment to these important
37 allies who are in harm's way; now, therefore, be it

38 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
39 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature calls upon the United States
40 Congress and the President's administration to expedite actions at

1 the United States Department of State to process the visa
2 applications of our Afghan allies who have been identified and
3 vetted by the United States military or other agencies as having
4 risked their lives by supporting and working for United States
5 troops overseas, and to expand the number of visas offered to our
6 Afghan allies; and be it further

7 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
8 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
9 States, the Speaker of the House of Representative, the Leader of
10 the United States House of Representatives, the Majority Leader
11 of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, and each Senator
12 and Representative from California in the Congress of the United
13 States.